

Profile of a Spoiled Cat

Are you encouraging your cat's bad behavior? Learn how to avoid spoiling your cat.

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It's generally not recommended to feed your cat human food, Battista said, "but if you do want to feed them some of your dinner wait until you're done, then feed them in their dish with their normal food."

Soiling. House soiling can be difficult to manage. "If it's a sudden behavior change and there's no medical basis for it, make sure it's not a change in litter, furniture or a new cat. Household stress can cause this problem. As cats are very routine-oriented and territorial, the best thing is to confine the offender to a safe room and make them familiar with a litterbox," Virga said. "It's OK to pick up the cat if it's on the verge of soiling, and then place him in the box."

Virga views animal behavior from a holistic view and considers underlying issues such as physiology, neurology, social circumstances, the household and the environment. "My philosophy is [in favor of] medication when the cat is putting other individuals at risk," he said. "[Medication is advisable] if behavior modification is not sufficient to adjust the problem or if there is a strong neurological basis. I would rather not use medication if I can adjust the environment or social situation."

Part of Virga's work with individual cats involves making a comprehensive history of the cat's social and physical situation. "It gives the owner an opportunity to describe specific problems," Virga said. "I evaluate the kitty by direct observations or video."

"Whatever the cause of the problem, the only time punishment works is when you catch the cat in the act," Virga said. "No one should ever hit a cat. You use minimal intensity to interrupt the problem and then redirect."

"How we respond to our beloved feline gives the animal some sort of reinforcement. Our responses impact their behavior," Virga said. "You may love it when kitty snuggles while you're working on your computer, but the next time you're working on your deadline and kitty is there, remember you said it was OK."